



SPOKES NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL EDITION

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THE ROTARY WOMEN OF 1987

By Wendy Anderson

The Rotary Club of Duarte's charter had been revoked in 1978 after they violated Rotary International policy by admitting women. The Duarte club filed suit in the California courts claiming that Rotary Clubs are business establishments subject to regulation under California's Unruh Civil Rights Act, a law that bans discrimination based on race, gender, religion or ethnic origin. Rotary International appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. On May 4, 1987, the United States Supreme Court confirmed the Californian decision supporting women, in the case *Board of Directors, Rotary International v. Rotary Club of Duarte*. After the ruling, Rotary International ended their policy of gender restrictions. Sylvia Whitlock became President of that club in 1987, the year the United States Supreme Court ruled that the club be reinstated, thus making her the first woman in the Rotary World to head a club as President

The first three women that were "elected to membership" at the Rotary Club of Pasadena on June 17, 1987 were "Welcome Mary, Kathy and Joyce!" They were Mary B. Ferguson (Rotary Club Manager), Joyce Richards, Girls Club Executive and Kathryn Hines, VP of Ingham, Coates & Payne **AKA Kathy Meagher**. Sarah Orr joined on July 15, 1987, Christle Balvin, Jane Waas and Margaret Sedenquist (1/17/27 - 2/9/21) joined on September 1, 1987



Photo: Sarah Orr, Kathy Hines Meagher & Jane Waas taken on 1/11/23 by Tammy Silver

PAST PRESIDENT KATHY HINES MEAGHER: When I joined Rotary on June 17, 1987 I was the VP of Ingham, Coates & Payne. ICP had four male members in the club. Wes Weston, my sponsor, worked at Rubio Canon Land & Water. He had also sponsored me in the University Club in 1986 when they opened membership to women. Phil Taylor was the 1986/1987 president of our club. The first three women, Mary Ferguson, Joyce Richards, and I, joined on June 17th and were the last to join in Phil's year.

I found all the male members of the club to be very welcoming and supportive. Mary Ferguson was the club secretary and told me only one male member quit because woman were allowed to join. I was invited to join a tennis group by Bob Kawashima and Al Lowe. Mary Ferguson and Al, her husband, became close friends.

When I joined, you were assigned to a committee. I was put on a new committee, PolioPlus. Member Ken Hemmings, as a polio survivor, chaired the committee.

Don Cameron was the 1989 president and he asked me to be the SPOKES editor. This was a big honor and a big job for a new member. In those ancient days my job was to collect tidbits about the members, get the picture and bio on the speaker, collect articles written by other members and deliver everything to a print store in Monrovia. Don knew how to be a president. He met with all his chairs before the year began. He expected us to know what our job was and to do it. Don't come to him unless you needed help. He didn't want to proof our work before it went out. He wasn't a micro-manager. Good advice for all presidents. The following year I chaired SPOKES for a second year at the request of President Joe Lonergan. I didn't become President until 2015. Wouldn't have considered it, but PP Diana Peterson-More said it was time I stepped up, and I did. My two proudest moments in my year: my first meeting JP Harris, retired sheriff's department, joined our club and I immediately made him chair of Shop

with a Cop. He is still at it today, thank you JP. Second was Bikes for Christmas. Our first year we purchased 120 bike and 55 Rotarians, their families, and friends, showed up to assemble them. We kept increasing the number of bikes so Altadena and San Marion clubs joined in our efforts. The Salvation Army thru PUSD selected the parents who would receive the bikes, Huntington Hospital funded the helmets, Jane Waas put ribbons on each bike and we distributed them at the Salvation Army. When the pandemic started we weren't able to purchase bikes from Huffy because of a shortage of parts. It was a wonderful experience working with other clubs and to see the fellowship with our members and their families. Dennis Juett helped the build with his son and grandson.

Being the president of Pasadena Rotary was fun, best way to get to know your members. Especially my club Secretary, Mic Hansen (Mic the Knife)
Thanks for the memories, Pasadena Rotary

SARAH ORR: *My introduction to joining Rotary preceded the 1987 "door opening" to women becoming members of Rotary. Through an earlier career as a top professional with United Way organizations in various parts of the country, I accepted the offer of the United Way of Berks County, based in Reading Pennsylvania, to serve as its Executive Director, the first woman head serving in that role. The December 1982 offer letter included a membership in the Rotary Club of Reading. How progressive, I thought! Oops, they said, this was a mistake as the Rotary Club does not accept women as members. Clearly, the letter had been prepared with the expectation that they would be hiring a male leader. The offer, which I accepted, was changed to include an athletic club membership instead!

As a community leader, I, like most others, saw Rotary membership as a way to extend service to the community while being a part of a leadership network. As a result, with the legal action to allow women to become members in service organizations, as a Pasadena resident, and while a serving as a vice-president of the United Way of Greater Los Angeles, I tapped two volunteer UW board members who were members of Pasadena Rotary (both now deceased), to sponsor me.

In those early days, there were those who were opposed to our presence, despite strong qualifications and a commitment to ably serve as members. After a few years, most of the resistance was greatly diminished with most becoming strong advocates of our presence and contributions. However, some practices of the previously all male membership continued. One memorable experience was a demotion where the play created to "roast" the outgoing president included female members portrayed in low status roles with the portrayed leader roles given to male members. Afterwards, with my partner husband, Verne Orr, beside me, I stated my strong objections to Rotary leaders and the "ground rules" for productions were thereafter changed.

Much has changed, obviously, with the number of highly capable women Presidents listed in the roster, several joining me in our recollections as members of the first group of women Rotarians.

The first committee I served on was the new members committee. I had a longer role as a member of the Program Committee and with the fundraising events. The committee I am most proud of serving on is the Teachers of Excellence committee. I became a member the first year and moved to the chair position in the second year. It was a joy to work with committee members, the Pasadena School District personnel and, most of all, to learn about and support the incredible teachers who received the Teachers of Excellence designation.

I have loved and am grateful for the friendships that I continue to have through Rotary. I am very proud to continue my involvement as an Honorary Member, albeit from a distance. While I do miss the closer relationships that we had in the past when I lived in Pasadena, I truly enjoy reconnecting face-to-face with my long time Rotary friends during brief visits.

JANE WAAS: I joined Rotary on September 1, 1987. My father had been in Rotary for many years in a all male club. When Rotary decided to allow women to join, my father said "Well if we have to have them... I want to help pick them." Joe Lonergan was a close friend of my father's. I think I have known him since I was 5! So my father asked Joe to sponsor me. Several women were brought in about the same time. Much like my dad I worked at the front door of our room at the Hilton Hotel and greeted people as they came in.

When I arrived for each weeks meeting, I would set my purse at a table so I was sure to have a

seat. None of the men ever touched or moved my purse! At one of our meetings, the wives had been invited to hear the speaker. They saw my purse and moved it to another table without saying a word! Needless to say I was irritated to say the least!

Funny to look back on things like that. Bill Leishman also sat at the front desk and taught me many things about Rotary.

I have made many friends at Rotary and I am grateful to be a Rotarian!

PAST PRESIDENT CHRISTLE BALVIN: I've been in Rotary so long that many of those I came in with have already departed. But I will never forget the friendships that I've made and the ability to work with members to accomplish some wonderful things. I've visited with members of the club in building housing and have worked with the wonderful Joe Lonergan in his passion for education. I sometimes think that one of the greatest gifts of Rotary is our ability to inspire and to create programs that have long lasting benefits. To this day, I keep in touch with Joe Lonergan whose passion is education and who to this day keeps up with how the Teachers of Excellence program is going.



Different members have invested in different programs. All of them have been meaningful. From helping with Polio Plus to Creating the Dan Stover Music competition. The diversity in our club is amazing and the effort that different members put into it continues today. And the willingness of members to keep these wonderful programs going is a tribute to our club. I am proud to be a Rotarian and to be able to work with so many wonderful people whose main objective is to do good in the world.

I was fortunate enough to attend the Rotary conference in Argentina. What stood out to me was how powerful Rotary is in establishing grass root projects. But learning to meet with new people from all around the globe as Rotary does was very impactful to me. One experience I will not forget is the role of women and how they are now beginning to have a more influential role.

One incident I cannot forget was when I was picked up one night at about 8:00 p.m. (they eat very late in Argentina) and was taken on a dirt road by some of my fellow Rotarians. The road was dark and they took me out for about 20 minutes into a dirt enclosure where they were starting to grill steaks, huge ones. They threw large slabs of meat on a grill and everyone partook. I had never seen such slabs of meat but that seemed to be the way they ate. And they then passed around beans and tortillas. I got home about 10 or 11 while someone was playing a guitar. It was an experience I will never forget.



REMEMBRANCE:

MARGARET SEDENQUIST (1/17/27-2/9/21):

Al Lowe sponsored Margaret when she joined Pasadena Rotary in 1987. Margaret and Al remained close friends for all the years to come. While I do not recall many details about Margaret's early years in Rotary, I know that Pasadena Rotary came to mean a great deal to my mother. The friendship, the camaraderie, the excellent speakers, and the opportunity to help the wider community – Margaret enjoyed and appreciated all of it. She chaired the Program Committee for several years helping to keep standards high for our weekly speakers; she frequently nominated local organizations for the community grants program; and, of course, Margaret treasured Rotary's Monday night book club meetings. Margaret's nature was always to give back and to help others. Rotary's mission to serve others and advance understanding around the world aligned with her own vision for a meaningful and productive life. – *Diana Sedenquist*

Weekly Live Wednesday Meeting by RSVP at 12pm
The University Club Pasadena
175 N. Oakland Ave., Pasadena, CA 91101

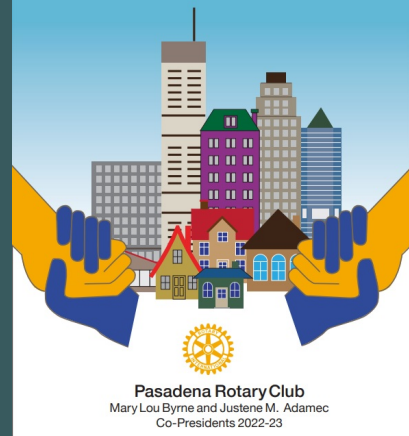
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Through Service**



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Meets: 2nd Thursday of the month at 5:00pm-University Club

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